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**FEMA**

**“Five Years Later: An Assessment of the Post  
Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act”**

**Before the**

**House Committee on Homeland Security,  
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response,  
and Communications**

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## **Introduction**

Good morning Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Richardson, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Craig Fugate, and I am the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). It is an honor to appear before you today on behalf of FEMA to discuss our progress since the enactment of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) five years ago.

The importance of PKEMRA to the emergency management community cannot be stressed enough. For the first time, it gave FEMA clear guidance on its mission and priorities, and provided us with the authorities and tools we needed to become a more effective and efficient agency, and a better partner to state, local, territorial, and tribal governments.

Today I will highlight some of the great strides we have made using this guidance and the additional authority given us by PKEMRA. In particular, we have made significant improvements to our approach to preparedness. We now focus on engaging the Whole Community in preparedness activities. We have realized that a federal-centric approach will not yield success and that instead we must collaborate and engage with partners at every level of government as well as the nonprofit and private sector. But there is more work to be accomplished.

Going forward, FEMA is committed to working with state, local, territorial, and tribal partners to develop innovative and effective ways to communicate both with first responders and with the individuals and entities affected by disasters. We will build upon the foundation that PKEMRA created to identify best practices and lessons-learned from each disaster. By having a culture that continuously looks for ways to improve, FEMA can continue to be a capable, innovative, and effective agency.

## **Response and Recovery**

PKEMRA gave FEMA the authority needed to lean forward and leverage the entire emergency management team in response and recovery efforts. This team includes not only government, but also private, private non-profit, and citizen partners—the Whole Community. This Whole Community approach emphasizes the importance of working with all partners to successfully prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Prior to PKEMRA, Federal incident response duties were shared by two separate teams: Emergency Response Teams (ERT) and Federal Incident Response Support Teams (FIRST). Due to cost constraints, ERTs were comprised of staff with primary day-to-day duties in other areas and the FIRSTs had only a small dedicated staff in two regions. This limited our ability to quickly and adequately deploy Federal response teams. PKEMRA changed this by consolidating response teams. As a result, FEMA now has Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs)—13 regional and three national—staffed with full-time, dedicated personnel.

These resources proved invaluable during the response to Hurricane Irene. In preparing for and responding to Hurricane Irene, FEMA pre-positioned a majority of the IMATS along the East

Coast to coordinate with state, tribal, and local officials to identify potential needs and address shortfalls in the disaster response and recovery. Additionally, Mobile Emergency Response System (MERS) assets are strategically located in disaster affected areas to support emergency response communications needs. Because of all the advance preparation and pre-positioning leading up to the storm's landfall, state, tribal, territorial, and local officials consistently reported no unmet communications requests.

Some other examples of FEMA leveraging the "Whole Community" during response and recovery include:

- In Missouri, FEMA Emergency Support Function #14 (Long-Term Community Recovery) provided planning, organizational, and on-site support for the Joplin Citizen Advisory Recovery Team's efforts to engage residents about the recovery planning process.
- In Georgia, following the severe spring storms in the southeast this year, FEMA and Georgia Emergency Management Agency collaborated with the State's Bar Association to provide free legal assistance to survivors.
- In Alabama, FEMA partnered with the Alabama Department of Mental Health to activate Project Rebound in the tornado-affected parts of Alabama to provide free crisis counseling for an extended time period after the disaster. This initiative was conducted under the auspices of FEMA's Crisis Counseling Program (CCP). FEMA administers this program in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
- In Missouri, FEMA worked with the State-led Housing Task Force to place families with school-aged children in mobile home parks first, successfully housing all families identified before the start of the school year. In addition, along with state and local partners, FEMA formed a Schools Task Force to support and help Joplin local officials establish temporary facilities for schools to meet their goal to open schools on time in the fall.

The Agency is also leading substantial response planning, including the development of plans across the Federal government for catastrophic incidents; planning for future operations for potential/actual incidents; regional planning for all-hazards events; and evacuation and transportation planning. There are also special programs focused on planning for chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosives (CBRNE) hazards to communities throughout the Nation.

Another way that FEMA is engaging with its partners is with the National Mass Care Strategy. This strategy will provide a framework to strengthen and expand resources available to help shelter, feed, and provide other mass care services by pooling expertise and identifying partnership opportunities. The newly created National Mass Care Council was launched in June 2011 and is co-chaired by the American Red Cross, FEMA, and the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (National VOAD). FEMA's role is to represent ESF-6 and all federal mass care components on the Council.

In addition, the American Red Cross and FEMA are now jointly leading the mass care portion of Emergency Support Function #6 (ESF-6), to better facilitate the planning and coordination of mass care services. During Hurricane Irene, FEMA worked closely with the Red Cross, local voluntary agencies, and impacted states, to ensure emergency shelters were open locally along the East Coast to provide shelter to residents who had evacuated from the storm. FEMA also coordinated with trained disaster workers from partner organizations such as AmeriCorps, National Civilian Community Corps, The Salvation Army and Southern Baptist Convention among others. These volunteers helped provide food along the entire East Coast. The effort included more than 250 feeding vehicles, tens of thousands of prepackaged meals, and temporary kitchens prepositioned in numerous locations.

PKEMRA required FEMA, along with its partners, to develop a national disaster recovery strategy to guide recovery efforts after major disasters and emergencies. Through additional direction in Presidential Policy Directive-8 (PPD-8), FEMA and its interagency partners have developed the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF). The final draft of the NDRF was released in late September 2011.

The NDRF clearly defines coordination structures, leadership roles and responsibilities, and guidance for federal agencies, state, local, territorial, and tribal governments, and other partners involved in disaster planning and recovery. The NDRF introduces six new recovery support functions (community planning and capacity building, economic, health and social services, housing, infrastructure systems and natural and cultural resources) and identifies specific recovery leadership positions that help focus efforts on community recovery such as the Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator (FDRC). The FDRC will be deployed when a federal role is necessary and significant interagency resource coordination is required due to the large-scale, unique or catastrophic nature of the disaster. The FDRC's sole focus is coordinating available resources to assist the community with rebuilding and recovering.

FEMA has been field testing certain aspects of the NDRF, including the appointment of a FDRC. For example, in the wake of the 2011 tornadoes that tore through Alabama and much of the south, a FDRC was appointed to work with Alabama state officials to develop a recovery strategy that emphasized coordination. In addition, the Governor established a lead state agency to manage state coordination efforts and staff were co-located within the Joint Field Office to provide a direct connection between federal and state partners. The NDRF recognizes the importance of engaging and utilizing the entire team—federal, state, tribal and local governments, non-profit organizations, and the community—to help a community maximize available resources to recover from disaster.

FEMA has also improved its disaster case management services. On December 3, 2009, FEMA signed an interagency agreement (IAA) with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The IAA specifies each agency's responsibility for a two-phased Disaster Case Management (DCM) Program for future deployment. On March 11, 2011 FEMA signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with ACF to strengthen areas of mutual support and coordination in the development, administration, and implementation of the DCM. Phase I of the DCM Program consists of the ACF DCM model of rapid deployment with immediate assistance to applicants. Phase II is a State-managed DCM Program that will assist applicants

with long-term unmet disaster needs. Additionally, FEMA has developed and released a DCM Application Toolkit and is currently developing a DCM Program Manual.

These are just a few of the many examples of FEMA's efforts to utilize the expertise and resources of our stakeholders at every level and use the newly developed tools to improve response and recovery capabilities and activities.

## **Preparedness**

Part of FEMA's mission is to "develop and coordinate the implementation of a risk-based, all-hazards strategy for preparedness." FEMA's Protection and National Preparedness (PNP) organization includes both our National Preparedness and Grant Programs Directorates, which work to ensure the nation is adequately prepared for disasters of all kinds. PNP strives to promote national preparedness through a comprehensive cycle of planning, organizing, equipping, training, exercising, evaluating and continuous improvement.

Our National Preparedness Directorate has met some of the preparedness goals envisioned for the agency through PKEMRA, including:

- Issuance of Credentialing Guidelines;
- Promulgation of a National Incident Management System (NIMS) Training Plan; and
- Refocusing and improving our National Exercise Program.

These are only a few of NPD's accomplishments that will contribute to national preparedness. Our Grant Programs Directorate continues to focus and improve upon our many preparedness grant programs, which have provided tens of billions of dollars in critical aid to our state and local partners in advancing their preparedness.

This September, we held a National Recovery Tabletop Exercise (Recovery TTX) in the Washington metropolitan area. This exercise involved players from the Whole Community, with over 200 participants from federal, state, tribal and non-governmental organizations. The Recovery TTX consisted of both plenary and breakout group sessions and focus on three planning horizons: short-term, immediate, and long-term recovery. This exercise was the first opportunity to explore the applications of the National Disaster Recovery Framework using a large scale, multi-state catastrophic disaster scenario.

An important part of the Whole Community is the private sector, and FEMA works to incorporate them into its preparedness activities as much as possible. In addition to being strong partners in our most recent National Level Exercise, private sector representatives also participate in FEMA's no-notice "thunderbolt" disaster response and recovery exercises. To further connect directly to the private sector during the most crucial disaster response efforts, a rotating representative from the private sector works in FEMA's National Response Coordination Center during activations to communicate and coordinate with all members of the private sector including small businesses.

FEMA also stresses the importance of individual businesses conducting emergency planning. In order to raise awareness, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Ad Council launched the Ready Business Campaign as an extension of the Department's successful Ready Campaign. Ready Business helps owners and managers of small- and medium-sized businesses by providing them with practical steps and easy-to-use templates that include information on a variety of preparedness topics including creating an evacuation plan, fire safety, and protecting business investments by securing facilities and equipment. In addition, DHS grant programs managed by FEMA allow a tremendous amount of flexibility for state and local jurisdictions to include private-sector companies as part of their all-hazards planning efforts. Allowable activities include the development of public-private sector partnership emergency response activities, development of assessment and resource sharing plans, and the development or enhancement of plans that engage with the private sector to meet human services response and recovery needs of disaster survivors.

In addition to engaging the private sector, a realistic approach to emergency management means not only conducting exercises that reflect real disaster scenarios, but incorporating the needs and abilities of real disaster survivors into planning and preparedness efforts. Our planning must be inclusive of people of different ages and abilities and it must meet the access and functional needs of children and people with disabilities. In February 2010, FEMA established the Office of Disability Integration and Coordination, and in July 2010, established the first-ever Disability Working Group within FEMA. The Disability Working Group is responsible for ensuring that the access and functional needs of children and adults with disabilities are fully integrated into all aspects of FEMA's disaster planning, preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation efforts initiated and coordinated at the federal level. As an example, when we pre-stage commodities in preparation for disasters, we include basic items such as water, meals and generators. However, military-style Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) and other provisions are not necessarily suitable for the entire population, especially young children. So we transitioned from MREs to commercial shelf-stable meals and we pre-stage commodities including infant formula, baby food, electrolytes and diapers to anticipate, understand and specifically plan for the needs of children. By improving the preparedness of the Whole Community, FEMA is better able to respond to catastrophic events in an organized and efficient manner.

## **Mitigation**

In addition to our preparedness and recovery activities, disaster mitigation is an important part of preparing for disasters. In the April 2007 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report, "Potential Cost Savings from the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program," the CBO estimated that future costs are reduced by \$3 for every \$1 spent on mitigation projects. By encouraging and supporting mitigation efforts, FEMA leads the nation in reducing the impact of disasters and helping to break the "damage-rebuild-damage" cycle in America's most vulnerable communities. FEMA has the lead role in helping communities increase their resilience through risk analysis, reduction, and insurance. One mitigation tool is the Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis Program, which addresses flood hazard data update needs and preserves the successful Flood Map Modernization investment. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) provides flood insurance on a national basis to owners of properties located in vulnerable areas through the

federal government, through both a premium revenue and fee-generated fund called the National Flood Insurance Fund (NFIF).

In FY 2010, the NFIP reduced potential flood losses by an estimated \$1.6 billion. The Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program offers an annual funding source for qualified mitigation activities that are not dependent upon a declaration of disaster by the President. In FY 2010, the PDM program has reduced administration costs by \$800,000. Furthermore, Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) is FEMA's program to provide communities with flood information and tools they can use to enhance their mitigation plans and better protect their citizens. FEMA initiated 600 Risk MAP projects in this past fiscal year, which assisted 3,800 communities by addressing the highest priority engineering data needs, including coastal and levee areas.

### **Emergency Communications**

The ability to effectively communicate during and immediately after a disaster is essential to fulfilling our mission. In the past five years, we have—in response to changes in technology—completely overhauled the way we communicate with each other and with the public in a disaster environment. We now leverage cutting-edge technology as well as important social media tools to communicate in a more effective and dynamic way.

PKEMRA included the support of national communications capabilities as part of FEMA's mission. As a result, in 2008 FEMA established the Disaster Emergency Communications Division (DECD) within the Response Directorate as the lead integrator of tactical federal disaster emergency communications. DECD provides tactical emergency communications support utilizing its Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) and Mobile Communications Office Vehicle (MCOV) assets, to emergency managers and first responders when federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial infrastructure cannot support communications needs for disaster emergency operations. Some of DECD's activities included offering support to emergency responders in the field for the establishment of state-specific disaster emergency communications plans to improve the Nation's interoperability and response capabilities.

PKEMRA also requires the establishment of a Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG) within each Regional Office to report to the Regional Administrator and coordinate its activities with the Regional Advisory Council. RECCWGs have been established in each of the ten FEMA Regions. The Working Groups continue to mature, enhance membership, and collectively evaluate inter-and intra-state interoperability programs, share best practices, and advise the FEMA Regional Administrators on the state of regional communications interoperability.

Looking to the emergency communications of the future, FEMA is also developing a next-generation infrastructure for alert and warning capabilities, known as PLAN (Personal Localized Alerting Network). Cell phones are data centers, capable of quickly accessing and storing a large amount of information. One of the major lessons we learned from the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti was that even if the physical infrastructure of an area is completely destroyed, the cellular infrastructure may be able to bounce back quickly, allowing emergency managers to relay important disaster-related information and enabling the public to request help from local first

responders. This new, free public safety system allows customers with an enabled mobile device to receive geographically targeted messages alerting them of imminent threats to safety in their area whether nearby cell phone towers are jammed or not.

We are also expanding our use of social media tools. Social media is an important part of the Whole Community approach because it helps facilitate the vital two-way communication between emergency management agencies and the public, and it allows us to quickly and specifically share information with state, local, territorial, and tribal governments as well as the public. FEMA uses multiple social media technologies like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to reach the public. Rather than asking the public to change the way they communicate to fit our system, we are adapting the way we do business to fit the way the public already communicates. We value social media tools not only because they allow us to send important disaster-related information to the people who need it, but also because they allow us to incorporate critical updates from the individuals who experience the on-the-ground reality of a disaster.

### **Conclusion**

I am very proud of the progress we have made since Hurricane Katrina. While we still have more work to do, I am confident that with the authorities and tools given us by Congress and the lessons we have learned through their application during disasters, FEMA will continue to be an agile and innovative Agency that is consistently improving its processes. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have.